

## SHOOTING AFFRAY AT RELIANCE MINE

JOHN VAN HOOK FIRES FOUR SHOTS AT FRED MARTIN—VICTIM EXPIRED IN A FEW MINUTES—SHOOTING OCCURRED AT STARKE'S SCHOOL HOUSE.

From Shelburn, (Ind.), Enterprise, Nov. 20.

Friday evening about 6 o'clock occurred a most deplorable tragedy, one that cast gloom and sorrow among the friends of both participants, when John Van Hook, check weighman, at the Reliance mine, shot and killed Fred Martin, a fellow employee, at the Starke school house, a half mile from the Reliance mine.

Four shots were fired, all of which took effect. One struck the unfortunate victim in the pit of the stomach, one just below the heart, one in the left shoulder and one in the groin.

Many conflicting reports were in circulation regarding the tragedy, one being that Van Hook emptied two revolvers at his victim, firing 13 shots in all, and that each one hit the unfortunate man, but eye witnesses of the tragedy informed the Enterprise that but four shots were fired.

The tragedy is to be the more deplored, if such a thing is possible, from the fact that the causes which led to it were trivial and all differences between the parties could have been settled amicably had the men used reason instead of letting their passions and prejudices prevail. The difference that led up to the tragedy was caused simply by a misunderstanding of each other and a disinclination of one or both to listen to reason, or to make an explanation of occurrences that were easily explained and simple in themselves, instead of which each imparted wrong motives to the other that led to bitter feeling between the men.

The story of the tragedy and the causes that led up to it, as related by Van Hook to Marshal George Fox, are as follows:

Several miners had been reporting lost cars and it was suspected that some one was stealing them. Van Hook reported to the mine committee that he believed the murderer, man and his "buddy," Earl Reeves, were the guilty parties from the fact that they were mining more coal than anybody else on that run. Van Hook prevailed on the committee to give him an extra car for the suspected men in order to verify his suspicions, which he gave them and then took the car off them the next day, at which Martin complained of a lost car. The committee then refused to let the men go to work the next morning until the matter was adjusted. Van Hook came to him and inquired what was the cause of the lay off and when told the reason and that there would be a meeting of the local that evening to settle the matter, Martin threatened to kill Van Hook if he testified against him and said he was going to town to buy a revolver. This, he claimed, was his reason for shooting at Martin, as he walked towards him at the meeting of the local Friday evening, as he supposed Martin had a revolver concealed on his person. As to the truth of Van Hook's claim that Martin had threatened to kill him, we are unable to say, not having found anybody who had heard the threat made.

The meeting had not yet been called to order when the shooting took place, the men standing around in different portions of the school house, and it is very probable that had any of the shots fired missed their target they would have found lodgment in the person of some of the innocent bystanders. The fact that all of the bullets found their mark is considered rather remarkable from the fact that Van Hook fired them all from his coat pocket.

An inquest was held in Coroner Brewer's office Monday, Constable McCloskey having summoned the following witnesses: Eliza Stewart, Wm. Pierson, mine committeemen; Chas. Wilson, Thomas Graves, James Pierson, Robert Watts, Earl Reeves, Gless Robbins, Savannah Sisk and Marshal George Fox.

Earl Reeves, "buddy" of the murdered man, when interviewed by the Enterprise, gave the following version of the affair: The charge of the lost cars is not true and I have witnesses to prove it. We went into our room and break-through Thursday and were loading a car in each place. The coal was tight in the break-through and therefore we could load about two cars at the face while loading one in the break-through. The driver had left two cars, which he had left in two successive trips. I had my checks on both cars. I made the remark to Fred that he should check one of the cars. He was using paper checks at the time and had none made. He said to let it go, that we could make it even before we quit loading anyway, as we always split even on pay days. There had been talk of somebody checking cars and this led Van Hook to believe we were checking cars that did not belong to us on account of two cars coming up in succession. Fred had made the assertion that he had lost a check or else we had loaded one more car than we thought we had. He had

put two checks on one car, which led to the mistake. Martin being a new loader, having been a driver all his life, and having above his first coal with me about two months ago, had put two checks on the same car. John Van Hook, check weighman, had called on the committee to come out, seeing that these two checks had come up on one car and asked the committee if he could have a car off of his number that day to place on ours, being as the two checks had come up on one car, to even up and make out that we had stolen the car, and then stopped a car off next day to make an even number of cars to make the miners believe we had stolen the car. We did not know whether he had loaded 15 or 16 cars, because Fred had missed his check. When we went on top Fred said we had loaded 16 because they were on the number. The check weighman told us on Friday morning that seeing two checks coming up on one of our cars he thought we had lost a car. I said, "Johnny, if you thought we had lost a car, why didn't you mark on X to the side of it, as you do to other lost cars and tell us we had two checks on one car and we would have soon told you we did not have a lost car." Instead of that, to show that he held malice toward us, he tried to even up these checks by getting a car off the committee, Wm. Pierson, to place on our number, and then stopped it off the next day. I told him I had lost a car then and he made no reply to my question. The next morning we came to work and the committee stopped us at the pit head and told us we had better lay off that day and come to the meeting at night. I asked him what it was for and he said it was over some cars. I asked him to explain and he said: "Come to meeting." I never returned a word to the committee, but went home not knowing what we were stopped about. I thought probably we were ahead of turn and they were stopping us on that account.

Martin was upright and straight and I never knew him to carry any weapons, not even a pocket knife. I have known him for four months. He left West Virginia because of the mines being scab and came here so he could work in a union mine.

Bob Marratta said: We were all standing at the store talking, waiting for the meeting to be called and Martin came in. Wm. Pierson asked him if he had done him any harm by sending him home and Martin said: "No, you only did your duty." Van Hook then butted in and Fred told him he had better keep still. Van Hook put his hand in his overcoat pocket and Martin grabbed him by each arm to defend himself, as he had been told that Van Hook carried a gun. Van Hook then started shooting through his jacket, and when Fred fell, John went to the other side of the house and told the men to stand back as he had another load left. He fired only four shots, each of which took effect. Johnny called me into his house and told me to be sure to be at the meeting, as there surely would be something doing.

After the shooting Van Hook started for Shelburn and on arriving went to Lon. Hollinger's store. At the request of Van Hook Lon telephoned for Marshal Fox, who, on his arrival put Van Hook under arrest and took him to the county jail at Sullivan. It is reported now that the heat of passion has passed away and the prisoner has had time for sober reflection that he is almost broken down and continually pines his cell night and day. He has secured Attorney Fred Bays to defend him. The murdered

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